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Recently a pipe broke in my house. As anybody who has made emergency repairs to their home knows, these repairs are not cheap. But I paid to have it fixed because I need running water in my house. This unexpected repair has thrown my finances out of whack for the month and has made me revisit my budget.

Budgets are about choices. If there were no choices to make there would be no need for a budget; we could just spend whatever we wanted whenever we needed it. We would not keep a checkbook because there would be no need to check on our finances.

I am sure many of you remember a time when you had to stretch your food budget a little or had to make the best use of leftovers. In some respects, the budget coming out of Congress this year will be a casserole budget. We have to stretch certain areas and make due with less in other areas in order to have funding where we need it the most.

In past years we have been able to pay all of our bills in the country without having to borrow to meet expenses. I want our country to have a balanced budget for this year. Unfortunately, necessary spending on defense, homeland security, and education combined with the two-year old economic slowdown have made attaining that goal increasingly difficult.

We would all like to drive new cars, but if you are like me, you have other expenses, such as college tuition for your children and emergency home repairs that prevent you from being able to afford a new car. So I make due with the car that I have. What parent would not forgo a new car or a vacation to provide for their children's safety and their children's education? Who among us has not put off something for ourselves so that the tuition check can be sent in to the school or a doctor's bill could be paid? We in Congress are facing similar choices this year.

This is not the budget of my choosing. I wish that the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> did not require large increases in defense and homeland security, but they do. The first responsibility of the government is to protect its citizens, both at home and abroad. I intend, as a member of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, to support the President's request for additional spending. I also intend to work with the rest of the

budget to ensure that we get as close to balance as we can. During this budget debate, tough choices will be made. As we go through this process, I will keep in mind what is really important for our nation and do my best to meet the needs of everyone. These are special circumstances and call for special measures to ensure that our people are safe, that our children are educated and our economy recovers. I will see to it that this budget does just that.